Compelled by Curiosity

Stephen I. Katz, MD, PhD, contributed by Kim B. Yancey, Dallas, Texas

I met Steve Katz in January 1981 when he welcomed me as a candidate for a fellowship in the Dermatology Branch in the National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health. When I joined the branch six months later, Tom Lawley, a new and rapidly emerging senior investigator, was my immediate mentor, just as Steve had been Tom's some years earlier. Steve exerted a personal influence on my career while I was a fellow (1981–1984) and senior investigator (1993–2000) in the Dermatology Branch, a faculty member at the Uniformed Services University (1985–1993), and chair of the Department of Dermatology at the Medical College of Wisconsin (2001–2006), and he continues to influence me in my current position as chair of the Department of Dermatology at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas.

Steve possesses many core attributes that allow him to excel as a physician, scientist, administrator, mentor, and friend. The core attribute of Steve that I have chosen to explore in this narrative is that of curiosity: a behavior that has been essential for the durable development and display of Steve's creativity, expertise, interpersonal skills, and abilities as a mentor.

Throughout his career, Steve has displayed a curious and active (i.e., not passive) mind. His grounding in curiosity has allowed him to ask interesting questions, search for novel answers, push for discovery, and make an impact. Steve really wants to know "things" (in fact, almost everything). His curiosity, exceptional memory, and analytical abilities have also allowed him to build a vast knowledge base, integrate diverse ideas, and achieve great clarity of thought and expression—qualities he has used to engage and manage a diverse series of issues effectively. Curiosity also makes Steve a great listener as well as an individual who can readily ask second- and third-order questions in situations where ideas are being shaped or change is being managed. Steve's deep sense of curiosity has also provided him with a remarkable ability to anticipate and/or rapidly recognize new ideas and apply them in his laboratory work, administrative responsibilities, and interactions with others. Deep and enduring curiosity probably also accounts for why Steve is never bored or mired in routine. Knowledge derived from his unlimited curiosity underpins the courage that has allowed him to take on new projects in basic and clinical research as well as the myriad administrative responsibilities he manages as director of the National Institute of Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases. Curiosity and engagement anchor Steve's extroverted personality and contribute to his extraordinary interpersonal IQ. No one is a stranger to Steve; his experiences are shared with generosity and enthusiasm. He utilizes all of his abilities to coach and mentor trainees and colleagues throughout all phases of their careers—helping take people where they cannot take themselves.

Although no single attribute or anecdote can describe or elucidate a great mentor such as Steve, I have always marveled at how he has used his tremendous, innate curiosity to fuel his personal brilliance and foster the development of others.

The consummate mentor and his trainee: Steve Katz and Kim Yancey at the Great Barrier Reef in 1997.

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Mentorship Never Ends

Georg Stingl, MD, contributed by Paul R. Bergstresser, Editor, Dallas, Texas

In my January *JID* editorial concerning our dedication of the year 2011 to the mentors who make careers possible, I emphasized that most mentees have more than one mentor. Later in the year, I described the results of our survey, in which six academic scholars were recognized most often by members of our scientific communities for their contributions as mentors. It is my conclusion that these honors are richly deserved by each of the mentors described herein. Their relationship as "primary" mentors is described in this joint editorial. By contrast, I have seized the editor's prerogative and chosen to describe a different type of mentorship, one that I have enjoyed with Georg Stingl.

I first met Georg in 1979 at Brook Lodge, Michigan, in an NIH-sponsored meeting on immune mechanisms of skin disease. Both of us were young, although not all that young. My primary mentor, Wayne Streilein, was also present. The work that Georg presented had been conducted in the laboratory of Steve Katz at the NIH, and the work that I presented had been conducted with Wayne in two laboratories in Dallas. After meeting Georg, hearing his presentation, and speaking with him in the hallways, I thought, "This is a man of considerable consequence; perhaps I might work with him some day."

The following qualities led to my early conclusions, and they have been reinforced by long experience. (1) Georg was unafraid—he gave his ideas away like water over a waterfall. (2) His knowledge of cutaneous immunology was encyclopedic, even intimidating, and he would bring it to any discussion about science; this deep knowledge extended to opera and culture, another of our shared interests. (3) His ideas were novel and fresh; he sought new ways of looking at data. (4) Georg also carried with him a sense of competition—not competition to "win" but competition to get the right answer. Discussions with him were exciting and intense; I was inspired.

Georg Stingl and Paul Bergstresser discussing Langerhans cells at high elevation in the Austrian Alps.

Over the next ten years we competed for new knowledge about the immunobiology of skin, in particular about the epidermis, I in Dallas, he in Vienna. Our simultaneous identification, with Erwin Tschachler, of dendritic epidermal T cells in mice, precipitated by serendipity and facilitated by a host of colleagues, taught me again to listen carefully to his words, as he did to mine. We even considered during this time that I might come to Vienna for a period of work in his laboratory.

In 1993, it all came together. I had convinced Rick Sontheimer to stand in as chair of the department in Dallas for a year, and support money was made available through my NIH grant and other sources. So what has it been like to have a colleague and mentor who knows more than I do about many things, who offers his time and knowledge without reservation, and who inspires confidence and hard work among the many young investigators around him, including that aging colleague from Dallas? It led to an energetic scientific push that lasted a decade; it taught me how to inspire young individuals in my own department; it taught me to question rather than to critique; it taught me again that I can be wrong about an idea or a concept. In sum, mentorship never ends.

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Unconditional Mentoring: In Good Times and Bad

Jouni Uitto, MD, PhD, contributed by Angela Christiano, Deputy Editor, New York, New York

It's easy to be a good mentor when things go well. Data pour in, experiments are in high gear; postdocs are motivated; grants get funded; *Nature*, *Science*, and *Cell* papers are on the horizon. On the other hand, it's not easy to be a good mentor when times are tough. Postdocs lack motivation, data dry up, and the lab comes to a grinding halt. In this dark place we find the difference between good and great, as well as something I call unconditional mentoring.

I first met Jouni Uitto on a hot August night in 1989, when I was crouched in the bushes behind the auditorium at Kimball Union Academy, preparing to give my first talk at the Elastin Gordon Conference. I was hyperventilating, panic stricken, clammy, and cold. Although he had never met me, Jouni sat me on the steps and patiently talked me down from the ledge, despite having no vested interest in my success. Kindness got me through that talk. Unconditional mentoring.

Later—in the bar, of course—he asked about my plans. Having completed a PhD that unfortunately led to no peer-reviewed publications and mostly negative data, my sights were set on a career in cosmetics. Suffice it to say that I was down and dejected. By the end of the week, Jouni convinced me that I needed "just one year" as a postdoc to learn about elastin and skin aging. Young and naive, I agreed, and in 1991 I turned my car south toward Philadelphia.

Upon arrival, I became the prototypical, lackluster postdoc, strolling in at 10 AM and out at 7 PM, drinking lattes, and dreaming of lipstick. Shortly after I arrived, David Woodley and several residents "fished out" a partial clone for type VII collagen using epidermolysis bullosa acquisita (EBA) patient serum. The 'EB' project, at the time, held little interest to me.

One day, Jouni asked me to take a trip to the Rockefeller University EB Lab to "pick up some samples." Off I went, delighted with the opportunity to visit Bloomingdale's. But first, at Rockefeller, Martin Carter led me to a patient's room, and when the door opened, there before me sat a fragile, trembling little girl with recessive dystrophic EB, in a pool of blood and bandages. She turned to me with the face of an angel and said, "Are you the lady from Philadelphia who is going to figure out what's wrong with me?"

Everything turned white, and the last thing I remember was Dr. Carter's hand under my elbow ushering me out. In the hallway, the enormity of EB began to sink in. I sprinted to the train, past Bloomingdale's, and back to Philadelphia. The next morning, before Jouni had his coat off, I announced that I needed two technicians (one for days and one for nights

Angela Christiano celebrating her thirtieth birthday with Jouni Uitto at Dick's Last Resort in Chicago during the SID Annual Meeting in 1995. This was one of the good times.